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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 AMMAN 000247

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KPAL](#) [IS](#) [JO](#)

SUBJECT: JORDANIANS HOPE PALESTINIAN ELECTIONS WILL JUMP
START PEACE PROCESS

REF: A. AMMAN 00217

[B](#). AMMAN 00044

Classified By: CDA David Hale for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (C) Jordanians followed the Palestinian elections with interest, lauding the Palestinians for the smooth process and high voter turnout. King Abdullah on January 10 called Abu Mazen to congratulate him on his election and dispatched FM Mulki to Ramallah to congratulate the new Palestinian president in person. Abu Mazen also received Jordanian delegation members who had joined the ranks of observers during the election process. Jordanians hope that the elections will serve as a step towards reviving direct Israeli-Palestinian talks, and several contacts urged all parties -- especially Israel and the U.S. -- not to squander this opportunity. End Summary.

JORDANIANS OBSERVE, LAUD THE PROCESS

[1](#)2. (C) Jordanians have taken a keen interest in the Palestinian elections, applauding the Palestinians for the smooth process and high voter turnout. King Abdullah on January 10 followed an official cable of congratulations with a telephone call to Abu Mazen, stressing Jordan's "keenness to cooperate and coordinate with the Palestinians to go ahead in peace and achieve the aspirations of the Palestinians." King Abdullah told reporters after a meeting EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana on January 9 that the Palestinian elections were "a step towards enabling the Palestinian leadership to build their institutions and resume the peace process." After meeting PLO official Farouq Qaddoumi in Amman, FM Mulki departed for Ramallah to offer the GOJ's congratulations in person. Press coverage of the elections was heavy, dominating front pages in all major Jordanian dailies (ref A).

[1](#)3. (C) Abu Mazen on January 10 received Jordanian delegation members who had traveled to the West Bank to observe the elections. Former PM and current Senator Abdul Salam al-Majali told reporters that Jordan fully supported the Palestinian people, and commended the transparency of the elections. Partially in response to public pressure, the GOJ had backtracked on its original declaration that it would not send observers to the West Bank and Gaza. Following the dispatch of Majali's official delegation (ref B), a five-member parliamentary delegation headed by Amman MP Mamdouh al-Abbadi traveled to the West Bank on January 8 to monitor the elections. Abbadi told reporters after meeting Abu Mazen that their discussions focused on "Jordanian-Palestinian relations, which, we stressed, are of special and integral importance to us." Abbadi noted that his delegation would monitor the polling and ballot counting in Gaza, Hebron and Ramallah, adding that "people are very excited about the election process despite the humiliation from the occupation." After his own meeting with Abu Mazen in Ramallah on January 6, Majali said that Jordan's participation in the monitoring process reaffirms the solidarity between Palestinians and Jordanians. "Israel pledged that it will help the Palestinians vote and we are here to ensure that it will keep its word," he said, adding that Jordan wanted to help ensure the election is held in a transparent way.

[1](#)4. (C) Dureid Mahasneh, a Jordanian businessman who participated in Jordanian-Israeli peace negotiations in 1994, was impressed that the elections proceeded smoothly. How ironic, he lamented to Poloff, that the Palestinians, despite their dismal social and economic conditions, would be the ones to demonstrate political sophistication and an understanding of true democratic principles far beyond those on display in most Arab states.

ABU MAZEN'S WIN A VICTORY FOR MODERATES

[1](#)5. (C) Abu Mazen's electoral victory is an achievement for the voices of moderation, and the high voter turnout shows

that people are craving change, according to Hamadeh Faraneh, a former member of Parliament and political analyst. Noting that the election reinforced public support for Fatah at HAMAS's expense, he commented that Abu Mazen won on the merits of his positions, not his personality. Highlighting the public comments by a HAMAS official congratulating Abu Mazen after the election, he told Poloff that HAMAS is currently in a position of weakness that should be exploited.

MAINTAINING MOMENTUM CRUCIAL

16. (C) Some Jordanians are not so optimistic that the election of Abu Mazen will lead to a new chapter in the peace process. Dalia Farouki, who works with the National Center for Human Rights in Amman, commented to Poloff just before the election that Abu Mazen's success as President depends heavily on Israeli actions. Drawing on her experiences during visits to her family's home in Jerusalem, she says that people are psychologically scarred from more than four years of violence and destruction. In her view, they are much more skeptical of politicians and wary of empty promises than before the second intifada, and much difficult work remains ahead to move beyond the current impasse. She said that many ordinary Jordanians (and Palestinians) are not convinced that the Israelis (and the U.S.) are truly committed to the establishment of a Palestinian state, and will be looking for concrete actions to prove otherwise. Mahasneh concurred, urging that the United States become actively re-engaged to maintain the momentum generated by the election.

17. (U) Baghdad minimize considered.

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HALE